

Party to look into job, minimum wage issues

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The MIC general assembly this weekend will urge the Government to introduce a mechanism to provide more jobs for Indians in the private and public sectors, besides fixing a minimum wage for estate workers.

It will also call for more partially-aided schools to become fully-aided, Pupil's Own Language classes to be an integral part of the curriculum and greater financing for Indian businessmen.

Party president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said other core issues to be debated included efforts to increase the Indian share of national wealth, greater sensitivity among local authorities when dealing with non-Muslim places of worship and reducing the number of Indian squatters.

"These are the main points that we will be touching on at the assembly. The rural-urban drift in recent years has led to greater challenges today for the MIC and we will be dealing with them," he said in an interview.

Samy Vellu said the assembly, to be held in Shah Alam and to be opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Sunday, would be geared towards economic challenges facing the community, while also addressing social problems.

Unemployment among Indians continues to be a pressing problem as targets under the Outline Per-

spective Plan and Eighth Malaysia Plan have largely not been met due to bureaucratic delay.

"What we have now is a situation where the old system of employment is still being followed. This has led to fewer jobs being offered to Indians than expected," he said.

This is also the case with a proposed mechanism under the OPP to monitor and increase Indian share of national wealth, which stood at half of the three per cent targeted by 2010.

On the minimum wage for estate workers, he said the RM350 proposed by the Malaysia Agricultural Producers Association was commendable although field workers needed at least RM500 to RM600 per month.

"I appreciate the Mapa offer. The RM350 should be a basic monthly salary. They should have other incentives. The time has come for them to finalise the matter."

On social ills, he said, the rural-urban drift had led to migrants being ill-prepared for the complexities of city life.

Many, invariably, become sweepers, cleaners and construction workers, as they do not have technical skills to obtain better jobs.

Samy Vellu said the MIC spent nearly RM8 million annually on education and was prepared to provide skills training to urban youths.